# Civil Air Patrol
# Oral History Interview

WNHC 20.84-1

MS. MARILOU CRESCENZO EGGENWEILER


**NATIONAL HISTORICAL COMMITTEE**
**Headquarters CAP**

CIVIL AIR PATROL

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview

of

Ms. Marilou Crescenzo Eggenweiler

by

Col. Lester E. Hopper, CAP

Date: 19 May 1984

Location: El Paso, Texas

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That I, Marilou C. Eggenweiler, have this day participated in an oral-magnetic-taped interview with Col Lester E. Hopper, CAP covering my best recollections of events and experiences which may be of historical significance to the Civil Air Patrol.

I understand that the tape(s) and the transcribed manuscript resulting therefrom will be accessioned into the Civil Air Patrol's Historial Holdings. In the best interest of the Civil Air Patrol, I do hereby voluntarily give, transfer, convey, and assign all right, title, and interest in the memoirs and remembrances contained in the aforementioned magnetic tapes and manuscript to the Civil Air Patrol, to have and to hold the same forever, hereby relinquishing for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, and assigns all ownership, right , title, and interest therein to the donee expressly on the condition of strict observance of the following restrictions:

NONE

Marilou C. Eggenweiler DONOR

Dated 19 MAY 1984

Accepted on behalf of the Civil Air Patrol by Lester E. Hopper
LESTER E. HOPPER
COL CAP

Dated 19 MAY 1984

# CIVIL AIR PATROL ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

Civil Air Patrol Oral History interviews were initiated in early 1982 by Lt Col Lester E. Hopper, CAP, of the Civil Air Patrol's National Historical Committee. The overall purpose of these interviews is to record for posterity the activities of selected members of the Civil Air Patrol.

The principal goal of these histories is to increase the base of knowledge relating to the early accomplishments of Civil Air Patrol members who in their own unique way contributed to the defense of our great country. Certainly not of a secondary nature is the preservation of the contributions of individuals as Civil Air Patrol continues its growth.

# FOREWORD

The following is the transcript of an oral history interview recorded on magnetic tape. Since only minor emendations have been made, the reader should consistently bear in mind that he is reading a transcript of the spoken rather than the written word. Additionally, no attempt to confirm the historical accuracy of the statements has been made. As a result, the transcript reflects the interviewee's personal recollections of a situation as she remembered it at the time of the interview.

Editorial notes and additions made by CAP historians are enclosed in brackets. If feasible, first names, ranks, or titles are also provided. Any additions, deletions and changes subsequently made to the transcript by the interviewee are not indicated. Researchers may wish to listen to the actual interview tape prior to citing the transcript.

## SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

Marilou Eggenweiler begins this oral history with the telling of her personal background and her recruitment by Gill Robb Wilson. She vividly recounts many details of living and operating on the Civil Air Patrol Coastal Patrol Base 1 at Atlantic City, New Jersey. Her recollections add significant insight into the operation of this base from the time of its inception until its closure. Additionally she provides considerable information on her experiences with Tow Target Units 1 and 22.

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# CAP ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

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| Number: | WNHC 20.84-1 |
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H: Marilou, if we can get started off with just a little bit of background about yourself, family background, prior to CAP, I think it would be well to establish that.

E: OK. I'm a native of Atlantic City, which was the home of Coastal Patrol 1, born and raised there, graduated from Atlantic City High School, attended Barnard College in New York City, and then went to business school. While I was at the business school, which was called New Jersey College of Commerce in Atlantic City, I was recruited by a very exciting lady called Cecile Hamilton, who was secretary to a very exciting gentleman known as Gill Robb Wilson, and it just happened that they had opened a new patrol base at Atlantic City and were looking for a couple of girls to work in the office. So a cute little blonde named Helen Klimek and I were the two that were recommended and we reported to the CAP Coastal Patrol Number 1 as the secretaries. CAP Coastal Patrol started on the fourth of March in 1942, and it was a very interesting group of men that came in at the beginning. They were very prominent men from northern New Jersey and New York. Among them was a fellow that we called "Tubby" Burnham, who later became a base commander. There was a man named Harold Cobb, who used to be the skipper on our championship boats in the Davis Cups. There was a man named Edgar Woodems, who was the chief trainer for one of the real big stables, I

forget which one now, Jock Whitney or something like that. There was Wynant Farr, who had a paper box works outside New York City, a very well-known business man, and several others came on later. There was a prominent New York dentist, who developed the mechanism so that our planes could pick up any transmissions from any source, and I can't really think of any more right now.

H: I believe Tom Eastman was there.

E: Tom Eastman came in, too. Tom Eastman was from Eastman Kodak, and he was an interesting character. I'll have to tell you a few stories about him.

H: Well, we'll be interested in them.

E: The men came in on the fourth, feeling almost like they were on a lark. And on the fifth, they rounded up all the airplanes, and took them out to show them the route that they would be patrolling, from the mouth of New York harbor down to the mouth of the Delaware, and that was the end of feeling like it was a skylark, because the Gulf Pride had been torpedoed the night before, and the men looked down on debris, floating bodies, life jackets, this horrible oil slick--it was a very sobering experience for all of them. But they managed to maintain a rather cavalier attitude on their off-duty hours. They were all holed up in a small wooden hotel in Atlantic City, called the Hotel Chelsea, and there was a very interesting article, which you probably have seen, put in Life magazine about the first Coastal Patrol.

H: Back in contemporary period.

E: Yes. It was a very good article and most of the men's pictures were in there. We had quite an assortment of

airplanes right at the beginning. We had a Sikorsky Duck, which I think is the one that later went down to Rehoboth, and the one Hugh Sharp was flying when he rescued a couple of men in a very good sea rescue, for which I believe he got an Air Medal.

H: Yes, he did.

E: We had a Fairchild that belonged to Major Farr. We had a couple of little planes that we later had to discontinue using--they were too light for the work. We had a couple of big Stinsons, which turned out to be our workhorses, and a couple of Wacos, which were all right for pilots that could fly biplanes, but we had quite a few pilots that had trouble with biplanes, and we were always cracking up the wings, the lower wings on the Wacos, or WAY-COES, some people call them. The first day that we were supposed to report, they decided since they needed the office open from six in the morning to six at night, one of us would work six to twelve and the other one twelve to six, so I drew the six to twelve assignment for the first week, and on the seventeenth of March--every time St. Patrick's Day comes around I remember that that was the first day and send a card to my friend Helen, if she doesn't send one to me-- I walked in the rain down to the Atlantic City Airport, carrying my school books on one side, because I was still going to business school at the time, and my stenotype machine, and just as I came around the end of the hangar, Gill Robb Wilson--I didn't know him at the time--hollers: "Grab that wing!" So I dropped everything in the mud and grabbed a wing and stood there for half an hour holding an airplane down. (Laughter)

H: Let's regress just a moment, and I'm glad to meet someone who knew Gill Robb personally. There are quite a few stories about some unofficial operations out of Atlantic City by Gill

Robb and his wife and some other people before it actually started as a CAP Coastal Patrol Base. Do you know anything about that?

E: I don't know anything about that. I know that he was the guiding spirit and the organizer and everything else of the Coastal Patrols, but I don't know what he had done before that. When we came on the airport there was a National Guard unit from Maryland stationed there, who were doing a form of patrol work, they were actually--had been thrown in there in case of invasion or something, because they were trying to protect all the airports along the coast. But how much else had been done--I imagine he must have been coming in to scout the territory because he had the routes all laid out and everything else, when the other men got there. Atlantic City Airport at that time was way past its prime. The three hangars were three big tin buildings that had originally been put up for the annual new car shows. Before the big convention hall was built in Atlantic City, they used to throw these metal buildings up down on the beach to show the new cars, and they had been put out at the airport as hangars, and we always said we had the only airport in existence where every time the wind blew we'd holler: "Get the planes out of the hangar!" (Laughter)

H: Not the very best. The appeal for you to go down, and you say you were recruited by Cecile Hamilton--was there any military background or condition in your family that would lead you to be interested in the military?

E: No, it was a job. We didn't realize too much what sort of job it was. We just went in as secretaries. The early pictures of us in the CAP, you can see we were sitting there in regular dresses. Then one fine day we were ordered into uniform.

H: So basically you went out of patriotism or you were looking for a job or just what?

E: Just looking for a job. That was the original--why we first went on. Most of the men that came in, I think, were very patriotic. Most of them were over age for the draft. There were a few that were draftable. They were well-to-do men. They had nothing whatever to gain from being there, and still they came in with their planes and put in long hours, and I always admired them terrifically for it.

H: Did you have any particular interest in aviation prior to that?

E: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed. I spent my college years, every time I got home on vacation, sitting on the fence out at the airport waiting for one of my friends who were in the CPTP to give me a ride. I used to wear a crazy outfit. I had a silver streak skating jacket, an old aviation helmet, and a pair of bright red slacks so they couldn't miss me. I had an awful lot of hours in the air without ever touching an airplane. Just--I'd go along--ride along, in those days we flew Piper Cubs, which now look like match-sticks, and we used to take them up in the air and open up the sides and do loops hanging out on our seat belts, and all sorts of things that make my hair stand on end even thinking about it now.

H: Probably not your hair stand on end as much as the FAA people these days.

E: Oh, yes. They wouldn't have been able to stand it at all.

H: But you actually didn't have any type of flight training.

E: No. No, I just liked to ride.

H: Did you get to ride in any unusual aircraft other than the Piper you spoke of?

E: I always think, my first flight was in a Curtiss-Wright seaplane, believe it or not, when I was three years old. They were the old seaplanes in World War I, and my second flight was in a Ford Trimotor, which was sitting there in very rotted condition when the CAP started--still sitting on the airport. When the CAP was there, I had lots of flights. My main thing was one of the big sturdy Stinsons, because I always figured they could get in by themselves, no matter who was flying them they managed to land themselves, and I flew in the Wacos, and I was up in the ones they used to call the Biddies, the little Stinsons.

H: The little 10-A's?

E: Yes. Right. O-5. And the beautiful Fairline, like Major Farr had, I later owned one, Helen and I owned one between us, had lots of hours in those. Major Farr's plane carried the number 2302, which was one of the small ones, and ours was 322Y, which was one of the small ones. The numbers went way back, they were historical numbers, practically. And of course I flew in what we called our big planes, which were the Grummans, the Widgeons.

H: You flew in both of the Widgeons you all had?

E: Yes. I sat in both of them. The Widgeon owners were both well-to-do. The one was owned by Tom Eastman, the other was owned by a man named Zellers, or Sellers, or something like that.

H: Zelcer.

E: Zelcer, that's it. Yes. His son-in-law, Johnny Haggin, was the pilot on that.

H: An interesting thing--Zelcer's airplane is still flying and I have been in correspondence with its current owner. It's in Alaska.

E: Oh, isn't that wonderful!

H: It's the one we can best tell dropped --

E: Yes. I'm almost sure it was that one that dropped the depth charge.

H: I'm glad to hear you confirm that. The NC numbers are about six numbers apart. The artist who did the original illustration had a little problem trying to identify that. Just recently he wrote back and I found some records.

E: Yes. Because Johnny flew the plane that went out to drop the bomb, so I'm sure it was his plane.

H: That's really how we got it back through his father-in-law who bought it from a flying service, that originally had it, and the Grumman Aircraft people themselves are very much interested. I've talked to their historian. But I'm getting on the tape too much. But you did get the opportunity to fly a very historic aircraft.

E: Yes. I rode in it.

H: We're going to put a plaque in it, some day.

E: Oh, isn't that wonderful. It really was exciting, the whole thing about that.

H: When you went to work at the base, did you join CAP immediately?

E: Yes. We were taken right in. We were given the papers and signed them. We didn't care. We signed up. (Laughter)

H: That would have been in March.

E: Yes. Although there's no record. It is very interesting. When they gave the record of all the people that got put in the CAP, they don't seem to have my name on the list. The rest of us are there, the ones that reported and that they have reporting, but they don't have me on it. I don't know why because Helen and I were together. I probably typed the list and skipped myself.

H: That's about it. How do you spell Helen's name?

E: K-L-I-M-E-K. She lives in Newburgh, New York. I can give you her post office box. I've no idea where she lives. I just write to a post office box.

H: OK, I'll get that later. There was another prominent lady, I just recently ran across--the name escapes me--alledgedly Lady Astor's niece, last name was T-I-G-H or something like that, who claims to have flown out of Atlantic City.

E: We had women pilots right at the beginning, we had a few come in, but they weren't encouraged. It was a very macho outfit.

H: Well, she complained about this, and recently someone wrote a book, sort of a biography of her.

E: She might have very well been, but I don't have any record of them or anything else. Cecile Hamilton was a pilot. We just thought she was great--we thought she was the rat's rubbers, as they used to say.

H: Now, what was her later married name? I think that may have been a-

E: That I don't know. It might be, because she was a real gung-ho pilot. She was Gill Robb's right-hand man.

H: That may have been it. Actually, you went in CAP from a motivational standpoint as a job, and then you got hooked.

E: We got hooked, right. The both of us got hooked, badly hooked.

H: Then it became over patriotic desire to do the job right.

E: Yes, I got so hooked later when the tow target one was breaking up, I went out and started to enlisted in the Navy, and got up there and said: "No, I can't do it. I think I'll stay with the CAP." I had to get a release from the CAP to get into the Navy.

H: Oh, you did have to have a release from CAP in order to be able to get in the Navy?

E: Yes. Even those fellows that were drafted had releases.

H: Let's get off on a little different trend, and tell me a little bit about Atlantic City. We'll get back to you.

You've already mentioned it was at what airport. What was the name of the airport?

E: It was called Bader Field. Actually, it was named for an old mayor of Atlantic City, Bader, and it was the official Atlantic City Airport until they put the new one in at Pomona--that's inland from Atlantic City. I guess--my daughter has flown in to Bader Field, so I guess it's still in use, but I think the main planes land at Pomona and come across in small ones over to the airport. And it was stuck on a little island right off the end of Absecon Island, which Atlantic City's on, and what they call the Thoroughfare, the water that separates Atlantic City from the mainland, flows around it and goes down, and we had some very hairy, scarey take-offs, when they wouldn't clear the city when they had to fly the length of the Thoroughfare to get out to go on patrol first.

H: How about your runways? Did you have crosswind runways, or just one runway?

E: No, it was the traditional three runway-

H: Three runway operation. Grass or concrete?

E: It was gravel--sand, actually, and the runways were, I believe, black-topped or something like that, but the airport itself was a mess of sea gulls. That's what it was. (Laughter)

H: Gooney-birds! How about your office accommodations, living accommodations?

E: Well, the men, as I said, originally stayed at the Chelsea Hotel. A little later they moved into what at one time had

been a private club, called the Cosmopolitan Club, where they had rooms. There was a big bar downstairs, they liked that very much. And then aferwards we wound up renting a bunch of apartments at a housing development right near the airport. The men doubled up four to an apartment, except the married ones, and lived there. Some of the men had private accommodations. I was living with my sister, who was living in Pleasantville at the time, that's about six miles outside of Atlantic City. So I just commuted in by car every day. Helen was boarding with a family up in the Inlet district of Atlantic City, and we had an awful lot of Atlantic City people that were recruited into the CAP for airdrome work and as guards. We had peripheral guards all around the airport. The tower operator was an Atlantic City girl.

H: And who was she?

E: That was Ann Ackerman. She was a beautiful girl. She looked sort of like Rita Hayworth. She was absolutely gorgeous, and one of the coolest characters you ever heard in your life. I believe Johnny Haggin's wife was also a tower operator, but I couldn't swear to it. The one I remember particularly, I know there were two, but the one I remember is Ann Ackerman. She was quite well-known by everybody flying up and down the coast, and it was a common saying that if I ever go down, I hope that cold-blooded Annie Ackerman is up in the tower at Atlantic City. She wasn't cold-blooded, but she kept her head so beautifully in any sort of emergency. We had planes ditching, we had planes cracking up on the beach, and Annie's voice would come over so calmly: "Give your position, please. Send in the clear." And it just calmed the men down, just to hear her, you know.

H: She invented the Chuck Yeager drawl.

E: Oh, she was just terrific at that job. The only way I can describe her, and I mean it in a very nice way, she was such a sexy dame, it was really unusual to have her so efficient and so good.

H: For the most part, then, you didn't have any living accommodations on the air base.

E: No, we had none at all on the air base itself.

H: Now, how about your offices? What were they?

E: Originally they were just little rooms around the side of the Number 2 hangar. Number 1 hangar was just about abandoned. Number 3 hangar had the National Guard in there, and we just didn't use that too much. Number 2 hangar was our hangar, and we fixed it up slowly through the years. It just had a tin roof. We baked in the sun. It was terribly hot--long before air conditioning--but even insulation would have helped. The CAP divided it off into little cubby hole rooms down the side, we made one into a stock room, one into the Commander's office, one into the regular office, one was a place for the airdrome officer, and then on the other side we had a dispensary and a barber shop and a rec room for the pilots. And in the middle there was a division across and the main part of the hangar was the repair shop.

H: How about your specific office? What was it?

E: It was just one room in the thing, and very primitive conditions. As time went on we got supplies from the Army, but we started out with an adding machine that you had to crank by hand, and typewriters that broke your wrists every time you tried to type on them, and any kind of broken-down office equipment we could round up. Later, we were able to

draw equipment from the Army, and then we had some pretty nice stuff.

H: Your specific job was--

E: I was originally just one of the two--we started out, there was a Dr. Davidson in Atlantic City and his wife was the technical section head, and the head bookkeeper was a woman named Frances Glassman, whose husband was a CPA, and he set up our books, and she was the head bookkeeper, and Helen and I were the secretaries. And Mrs. Davidson left and Mrs. Glassman moved up to technical section head and then I was the chief bookkeeper, and then later on, when Mrs. Glassman left, I was technical section head. And Helen was very funny because when, after we'd been there a while, we were both assigned as corporals, and she would never take a promotion. She said she liked Corporal Klimek. (Laughter) I went up to Master Sergeant and she was still a corporal. And I later went up to Flight Officer, and she still insisted she was Corporal Klimek, she liked the sound of it.

H: She liked the sound of it better. I'm not going to say why that's good logic. (Laughter) I might establish that I am one of those people whom you refer to as a chauvenist. How about--tell us a little bit about day to day operations. What happened when you got to work in the morning?

E: Well, the patrols started out at dawn. We had a regular dawn patrol. They went out in groups of two. Two went up the coast and two went down the coast, and they flew until they would meet Rehoboth coming up from the south, and the one up on Long Island, outside Mitchell Field somewhere, coming down from New York. The Grummans flew alone. They figured they could take care of themselves if they were in trouble, but the other planes flew by two in case one went down there was one

to holler. The office acted just like any office. I've been an office girl all my life, and it's been the same job, no matter what I've been doing. That was the same as anywhere else, except we had a few things that made it a little more exciting, a little more interesting than most office work. We were told that in case the enemy came up over the beach, we were to shred our records and burn them before we left. We were given assignments, in case the enemy came up over the beach, we were assigned to airplanes to be evacuated to Allentown Airport, which was interesting, because after I got married, I wound up living within twenty miles of Allentown Airport. We were investigated by the FBI. We had people crawling all over Atlantic City investigating all of us, and we were fingerprinted, all that, which was very different from regular office work.

H: Kind of exciting, too, wasn't it?

E: It was very exciting. When something went wrong, when one of the men went down or something, it was really an experience. You just couldn't believe. We had a couple of very interesting things happen. Our National Operations Officer, after things settled down, was a man named Colonel Blee, and he had been a balloon pilot or a balloon observer, I think he was, in World War I, so one day one of the Navy blimps came over in the middle of a horrible rain storm. They were flashing their blinker, and Col. Blee said: "That blimp's in trouble. I'm an old blimp man. I know that blimp's in trouble." So everyone went out to grab landing ropes, to get the blimp down in the storm. A fellow named Wallace, who was the man that trained everybody in Morse Code and things like that, went out and he was looking at the blinker. Col. Blee said: "What's it say?" Wallace said: "They say: 'What are all you damn fools doing standing out in the rain?'" (Laughter) Then another time, when Pomona

opened, it was in the War and it became a Naval air base, instead of being a regular civilian field, and the first planes were brought in by Marine pilots, and never in my life, before or since, have I seen such maneuvering as they can do. They were coming down on our big long runways, landing as if they were landing on a carrier deck: down, wings start up, plane goes off to the side, down, wings start up, plane goes off to the side. We all stood there with our mouths open to see that type of precision flying. So we had all the pilots out for a big brawl at the hotel where the men were living, and they were just incredible men. Later I met a bunch of incredible women. They were the women pilots who did the ferry work, flying into Newark, when I with Tow Target 22. There's just something about pilots. They're incredible people, that's the only way I can describe them.

H: They do tend to be different.

E: They really are. We had an Army plane go down one time. That was a terrifying experience. It crashed and burned right on our runway. The man was in trouble and he was trying to get the plane down and didn't make it, and our fellows went out with our fire-fighting equipment--we had foamers and things like that--the minute the foam would stop it would go back up in flames with that high octane gas. Then they had to run, I don't know how I got there, I wound up lying under the tail of an airplane. The bullets, the magazines went off and with tracers, I guess they were all bullets, but we could see the tracers, they were flying every which direction. It was a terrifying experience, absolutely, just to hear the tanks go, hear the tracers going, they made a funny whistle when they're going, and things like that. We had another Army plane tried to make a landing, and flipped over on its back. The pilot walked away from it. We tried to make him lie down and he said: "No. I'm fine." The doctor checked him. He said: "I

think he's all right, but I'll take him to the hospital." He died on the way to the hospital. A lot of our own planes went down. When they'd get in trouble they'd head for the beach. But unfortunately, Atlantic City beach and all the beaches in that part of Jersey have big jetties sticking out to hold the beaches. They'd try to land and they'd hit the jetty, so we had plane after plane go over on its back on the beaches down there. We had a fellow named Cliff Poley from up New York state, little bit of a man, very wiry, and he had a great big observer in with him. The plane flipped over and the observer was hanging in his seat belt and stunned, and Poley picked him up, released his seat belt, and got him out of there. We never figured out how he did it. We had a man who was the head of Buffalo Pharmaceuticals in Buffalo, New York, and he had our only gull-wing Stinson. We used to call him "Flat-pitch" because he'd always fly over the--

H: Make noise.

E: Yes. He'd flat pitch it going over the city--just deliberately. He and his observer were the first ones we lost in the drink.

H: Who was he, do you recall?

E: I'm trying to think of his name. It'll come back to me, but he was the head of Buffalo Pharmaceuticals. I'll look it up on the list here, when I get a chance. The observer, at that time they were wearing Kapok life belts, which we later got rid of, we got regular Mae Wests, the observer was a lightweight man, he had his Kapok vest on and he got trapped in the back of the plane. He floated and he was trapped in the back and he couldn't get out. This big, great big man, built about like you, he went in, he was out himself, and he went back into the airplane, released the fellow from his

Kapok vest, brought him out and held him up until he got rescued. Major Farr was our commander at that time and he said he was so mad at him he could have killed him except he was a damn hero. He saved his observer.

H: Do you remember his name?

E: No. I'll look it up. I think I have him on here.

H: Those were the days of uncommon valor for a lot of people.

E: We had a couple of incidents that I think were deliberate. The pilots all looked at our big thoroughfares coming into Atlantic City and wondered if they could land planes on them. One day Maj. Farr, with his smooth-running airplane, had engine trouble and wound up landing on the road. We were always sure it was deliberate engine trouble. He took off very nicely again. It was big enough to land on and you could get off without getting in--with that type airplane.

H: He had the right to test.

E: Yes. That was the Fairchild 500. I couldn't think of the name of it. I had one and he had one. I'll have to tell you how we wound up owning an airplane. Let me see. We had Rudie and Eggie were the "Order of the Duck" and that was hilarious because Rudie was--

H: Tell us about that crash, you ought to be close enough to that to really be able to recall it.

E: Well, I wasn't going with Floyd at the time. Floyd had a girl up in his home town of East Mauchunk, Pennsylvania, and this was at Atlantic City. Floyd and I didn't get together until after we were up in CAP 1 or 22, one of those two, up in

Hadley Field. But anyhow, Rudie was Engineering Officer. That meant he was the head mechanic, and Floyd was Assistant Engineering Officer, the second head mechanic. And every time we had a critique after a crash, either Rudie or Eggie would say: "The only trouble with that airplane was the loose nut behind the stick." Every time, that was always their comment. They were very proud of their maintenance. We had beautiful maintenance. Our planes were really maintained. They came on in bad condition. They got torn down before they ever went out on patrol. They were both sticklers. Rudie is still a marvelous mechanic, and a very hard-headed mechanic. You don't compromise with Rudie, and my husband was the same way. So, anyhow, we had a bombing range, which was the old Gulf Star, or something like that. The old wreck was out there, and they used to go out to practice bombing on that. Rudie wanted to get out of the shop and become a pilot, so he asked permission to go out--he had his own airplane, his own Waco--and he wanted to go out bombing and Eggie went along for co-pilot. So they made about two runs. The third run the plane went in the drink. We just thought that was so hilarious, because they had to have a critique, and the men all sat there laughing and said: "What was wrong? Was there something wrong with the plane, or was it the loose nut behind the stick?" (Laughter)

H: What was determined to be the cause?

E: They never did determine it. The plane belonged to Al Muthig, he was Wynant Farr's buddy, and he was my pet. It was a beautifully maintained Waco. He was very fussy. When that plane was in, he wanted it done right. He was the Operations Officer, so it was always done right. That was the one that went down in the drink, and the navigation lights stayed on for about two days, down in the water.

H: When was that, evening, morning?

E: Evening. It was an evening run. The fellows would fly over it and they could see the navigation lights, and Muthig kept saying: "My plane's still in operation. I should still be getting money." They got so much every hour of flying time. He says: "It's down there. You can see it. I should still be getting money." He was really funny about it.

H: Did they lose an engine? As the reason they went in.

E: They never knew.

H: They didn't say they stalled.

E: They said the propeller stopped, but whether he stalled it because he was out of flying position or what did it, we never knew. It was the funniest critique we ever had because-- (end of tape)

H: --amusing part of your husband's crash.

E: The Coast Guards picked Eggie and Rudie up. My husband, he wasn't my husband at the time, but anyhow he was so big his wet suit didn't, they couldn't zip it up. The men wore wet suits by that time, in case they went in. So his was all full of water, and he was a 250 pound man to start with, who had all this water in, and they had a terrible time rescuing him, getting him on to the little Corvette, with all this water. As soon as the Corvette came in, Dr. Davidson was waiting, that was our Flight Surgeon, and he tried to get on the Corvette and lost his balance and fell down and knocked his face open. He had a cut down the side of his nose. So one of the Coast Guards said: "Wait a minute, sir, I'll put iodine on it." And he says: "No you won't! That stuff stings!"

(Laughter)

H: Typical doctor's reaction. I'll put it on you, but don't you dare put it on me.

E: Right. And then we had a couple of tragedies. We had one fellow that, we didn't know what was the matter with Maj. Farr, he wouldn't let this particular fellow go up in an airplane, and he wouldn't let him go on duty as Officer of the Day. We thought he was picking on him. We really thought he was. He took him off the Officer of the Day roster and said to keep him on the ground. So, one day our OD was playing Ping Pong, and he asked this fellow to hold the gun for him. In fact this temporary Officer of the Day, he didn't know anything about the fellow not being on the roster or anything, so you couldn't blame him. So the fellow went back in the barber shop, got in a barber chair and shot himself, killed himself. So we thought Maj. Farr was very astute. He must have seen it coming, the pilot, afraid to put him up in a plane, afraid he'd crack it up deliberately, or knock the pilot out or crack it up. He was evidently becoming suicidal. The rest of us didn't realize it. We just thought he was a weirdo. Then we had another tragedy that we missed very much. A young man from Denver, Colorado, an Orthodox Jewish boy. He was practicing in a Bellanca. The Bellanca was a very unstable airplane. People that liked them, liked them, but it takes a really good pilot to handle them. Berger just wasn't up to that pilot. He was such a nice fellow. We were all crazy about him.

H: Ben Berger?

E: Yes. He cracked into the thoroughfare where they were building a new road into Atlantic City and killed himself on Easter Sunday. We felt very bad about that, but we had so

many comments about that. We had to get permission to bury him in his uniform, because he was Orthodox Jewish, and was supposed to just be in a white shroud. And we had to have permission to have him embalmed and all the rest of it, because we wanted to take his body back to Denver. It was interesting. None of us were used to that before. And we sent two men out with him, out with the casket. We had people that I met years later, that saw that particular thing. Every time the train stopped, our two boys went back and stood with the casket. It was really very impressive. We felt very bad about it. I still feel bad about it years later, because he was such a nice fellow. It was a shame that it happened to him, but it did.

H: Was that the only fatality you all had at the--

E: Yes. One fellow shot himself, and one fellow was killed in an airplane.

H: CAP standpoint--

E: Yes. We had a lot of accidents. We were lucky that way.

H: When you say you had a lot of accidents, do you remember any of the other sinkings, I mean other crashes at sea?

E: No. We lost the gull-wing and we lost Muthig's Waco, and we had a couple that were washed out, but they were on the land. They just couldn't be repaired. We had a Beechcraft go down right in the Thoroughfare. They pulled that out, but it was beyond saving.

H: Do you recall who was flying it?

E: I don't know if Lankalis was flying it or someone else.

Lankalis was the owner. He was a young fellow from Lansford, John Lankalis. A lot of the men wouldn't fly that particular ship. It was a biplane, in the first place. A lot of the fellows were not good on biplanes, and it was quite unstable in crosswinds, and we had lots of crosswinds that came up unexpectedly down there. But I really don't remember who was in it at the time. It's too bad all the records are gone. It was all written up in the records.

H: You say your pilots came in sort of like a lark and suddenly were sobered up, and became pretty highly motivated after that, didn't they?

E: Yes. That first bunch, some of them stayed, like Tom Eastman stayed 'til Base 1 closed, and Mr. Farr and a couple of the others, and then we had the later pilots that came in were mostly highly motivated, I would say. When they started coming in from the other-- the CAP was feeding them in from mostly Jersey, but we had them from as far away as Iowa and places like that. Our base was originally New York and New Jersey. The Pennsylvania CAP Wing, which you would think would have been sent to Atlantic City, went up to Long Island for some reason, and we later served with some of them in CAP 22, when they came in with us in CAP 1.

H: Tell me about the close-down. But before we talk about the close-down, were there any other amusing incidents that occurred while you were at Atlantic City, that you think would be well worth recording?

E: Well, we had some funny stuff. It was interesting the way that base developed. I don't know whether you are familiar with how people were paid or anything. The workers were all on a per diem allowance. The office force and the maintenance crews and things like that got $5 a day. The mechanics and

the observers got $7. The technical section head got $6, and I think the tower operators got $6 a day. And the pilots got $8, and that was all that was paid. The base had absolutely nothing when it started. The airplanes were supposed to get--there was a sliding scale, they got so much an hour for insurance, so much an hour for maintenance and so much for depreciation. And we kept the maintenance money in a maintenance fund. We kept the insurance money in an insurance fund and paid the premiums, the insurance was by the hour flown and so was the maintenance was in a fund. And through the years we gradually got enough money in that maintenance fund to do all kinds of things for the base. But when we first started out we had nothing and the government was very slow getting the checks out. In the first place, Washington was a scramble, it took an act of Congress to get the checks through the mail system down there, and besides that it was just a general nuisance. We had to make out vouchers for everything to send in to Washington, mail them in air mail, and hope that the checks would come back. So the oil companies were very interested in having us there, because they were taking terrible losses in the submarine warfare, and they set up a fund called the Tanker Protection Fund, and put it at our disposal. And we used that to make loans to the fellows that were starving without having enough money to keep going and -

H: That's when Major Farr made his famous run on the Sun filling stations, wasn't it? Didn't he go talk to the people at Sun Oil Company?

E: I think there were a bunch of them that went to Sun Oil. When the base first started, they were on a rotating officer basis. There was a different fellow in charge every week, and Major Farr was in charge, he was Captain Farr I think at the time, he was in charge when they said: "We're going to have

one CO and that's it." And he was our CO right through. He was our Old Man. He was a character. I loved him dearly. (Laughter) And the other officers froze into their positions, too. But before that it was a rotating thing. One fellow would be CO, one fellow would be Operations, and then a week later they would all change. And so I don't know who all was with the Major when they went on that to talk the oil companies into it. I later was just as bad, because when the base was closing, when Number 1 moved, we carried across from, I think from CAP 1 to Tow Target 1, but when that was closing down, I went on the Sun Oil run, I guess you'd say it, and asked them if they'd turn that money to us permanently, instead of taking it back. And then we used that money, we divided it up among the airplane owners, according to the number of hours their airplanes flew, which was very fair. The planes were taken back in excellent maintenance, most of them were in better shape than they were when they came on. There were a few exceptions, but a lot of them came in with bailing wire holding their cylinders in and things like that, and went out beautifully maintained. But some of them just flew and flew and flew. We had one Waco, just had incredible hours on it, and it took very little maintenance. It came in well maintained and they were good airplanes for that type work. So they wound up with something like $2,000 dollars, or something like that, and very happy, they'd been griping before that. The planes that only flew 40 hours had whatever 40 hours would pay, you know. So the oil companies were glad to let us have it, because we really did a major job for them, there's no doubt about it.

H: Tell us a little bit about the bad Sunday, when they decided they were going to close down and let you all know."

E: Well, we knew there was something coming, but we weren't sure what. We weren't sure how many people would stay on or

anything else, and we finally got the notice that a very condensed outfit would be going to Hadley Field, New Brunswick, as a Tow Target unit, but before that we had the rumor that we were going to Oklahoma. We had a rumor we were going to Sault Ste. Marie. We had all sorts of rumors. We were all packed. The whole base was packed up, and all our suitcases and all sitting there, waiting to go. We had assignments, what airplanes we'd go in, which cars would go, and all of that. But there we sat from I guess August until Christmas. And the base kept getting smaller and smaller as they told us we'd have fewer and fewer people, and our boys were going off. An awful lot of our pilots went into Air Transport Command. Most of the younger fellows just went into regular Army and Navy and stuff like that, and it was very sad and very boring. The only thing interesting about that time for me was, that's when Helen and I turned into airplane owners, because they decided that all our pilots should have instrument training, and no one was willing to have his plane equipped with a hood to learn instrument work, so 322Y was up for sale. duPont wanted to get rid of it. Hugh Sharp said: "Why don't you buy 322Y." And nobody wanted to buy it, so Helen and I borrowed the money from the base maintenance fund, and bought 322Y, and then we paid the maintenance fund back out of our depreciation money. And all the pilots were trained instrument work on 322Y, which was our plane. And then when we finally got up to Hadley, we sold it, and sold it for quite a nice profit.

H: Great.

E: I was never sure whether it was a legal maneuver or not, but the base did fine.

H: And you did fine, and that made it all legal.

E: Yes.

H: So it sort of just wound down and you say you went as a unit, although smaller, up to a Tow Target unit?

E: Yes. They put a few extra men in. There were one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight men were sent in to our unit, I think, from a group on Long Island that joined our unit, but we were a big base, we had about 150 people, and I don't have the pictures any more. We had, you know, those big pictures that they take that are about this long.

H: 150 people in the Tow Target unit?

E: No, in the CAP--

H: In the Coastal Patrol unit.

E: Yes. And when we got down to Tow Target, we were just a little--, that was all there were of us.

H: Just a few.

E: Yes. And a lot of them were fellows that hadn't been with us before.

H: Tell us a real quick thumb-nail, well not necessarily quick, but to give us a thumb-nail sketch of your activities in Tow Target. Did Major Farr take you up there, still as CO, or what?

E: Yes, he was still the CO when we went up as Tow Target 1. We were put on this Hadley Field, which was the original field from which the air mail service started. That's how old a field it was. It was right outside New Brunswick, New Jersey.

And our men there at that place were barracksed over on Camp Kilmer. They had a regular barracks assigned to them. Well, half of a barracks. We had a funny incident about that, too. We had one lieutenant on base from somewhere in Pennsylvania named Hoch, and Hoch was a perfect gentleman and never believed in letting down his standards under any circumstances. So it happened that they had a bunch of, I guess they were called Rangers at that time, the rough, tough, fellows that carry knives in their boots and do all the stuff landing at night and black on their faces and things like that. Anyhow, they were assigned to the other part of the barracks, and they were having their evening entertainment, attacking each other with knives and throwing each other across the beds, and things like that, and in the midst of all this Hoch came walking back from the latrine in robin egg blue pajamas, with a robin egg blue robe with white tassels, and said: "Good evening, gentlemen. Good evening gentlemen," as he walked past, and they said you never saw such shocked faces in your life as these Rangers watching this apparition going down there. (Laughter)

H: That upset the toughies?

E: Hadley Field was a very short field, and our planes were equipped with these big rigs to let out either a banner or a sleeve, and we had some very, very tight maneuvers getting those planes off over the trees on that field. But our fellows did fine. But the day that Tow Target 1 was closed down and combined with 22, Colonel Blee and the new commander, who was a man named Gresham from Florida, were coming in with Gresham's ace pilot, and they turned the plane over on Hadley Field. They couldn't make it.

H: Blee survived the crash. That's a new story.

E: Oh, that was so funny. He was such a dignified man. Here was our new CO, our National Commander and the Operations Officer from the new combined unit, and the airplane's lying on its back, the wings out flat on the ground, and the door opens. Colonel Blee adjusts his hat, and with great dignity walks out of the airplane right down the wing, CRUNCH, CRUNCH, CRUNCH, CRUNCH, CRUNCH, right down the length of the wing. (Laughter)

H: What wasn't damaged, was now.

E: It was damaged then, yes. I was thinking of another thing. This was during the lull, I believe, between CAP 1 and Tow Target 1. We had a very comical man named Rosenberger from New York City. He owned a boat repair outfit and Chris Craft sales outfit on City Island in New York City. He had his own airplane and things like that, but he had somebody else's airplane and flew on a courier mission up to, I believe it was old Mitchel Field up in New York, for the Army, and we got a phone call that Lt. Rosenberger had cracked up at Mitchel Field. And Major Farr said: "Oh, my God. Was he hurt?" "No, he's fine." Major Farr said: "Put the son of a bitch on the phone." (Laughter)

H: OK. Now you mentioned earlier that it was either at Tow Target 1 or 22 that you and your future husband decided to become man and wife. Is that correct?

E: Right.

H: How about a little background on that?

E: Well. I guess I trapped him. I don't know what else you'd call it. Helen and I had an apartment in Plainfield, which was right near Hadley Field, and Eggie was working on

something in the shop. They were building some kind of a big frame. We were always building something or having the Army build something for us. This was a great big metal frame. I think it was for an engine lift or something like that, and it fell over and hit him on the back. He was complaining his back hurt so bad, and I said: "Come over to the apartment and I'll give you a back rub." So he came over to the apartment. He never got the back rub. We went out on a date, and from then on we went out on dates, and finally wound up getting married. He always said I proposed. I didn't, but I did initiate it, I must say that. I invited him around to get his back rubbed. (Laughter) Eggie was six foot two and a half and about 250 pounds, and the men all said I was afraid to say no to him when he proposed. (Laughter)

H: That's what my five foot, very little wife tells our friends.

E: Oh, does she?

H: But it was really the other way. I was afraid not to propose,

E: Oh, yes, I'm sure.

H: Because of the size of her brothers. (Laughter) Don't you dare tell her that. (Laughter) Ok, you met and married him while you were still on active duty in uniform. How long did you all stay at Tow Target 22?

E: Well, we were married in September, and right after we were married, Tow Target 22, it was condensed a little more, and they closed down Hadley Field and sent us to Newark Air Force Base, at that time, it was at Newark Airport. We were in the British Overseas Airway hangar at Newark. We no sooner

got there and got a place to live than than Eggie was assigned down to Fort Bragg, where we were flying target missions for the artillery, down there. He was sent down as a mechanic.

H: Was there a tow target unit number down there?

E: It was all 22.

H: Oh, it was all part of 22. Well, then they had just given 22 missions all over?

E: Yes, we had three fellows were sent out to Sault Ste. Marie to drill them, then we were flying past batteries in New York.

H: How long did you all stay at Bragg?

E: He was at Bragg about a month. Then they sent a replacement mechanic down for him. They said he was too dreary. So we were at Newark until Christmas, and then we got sent to an air field outside Washington, D. C., at Christmas time, a miserable air field. We had no heat. In fact they brought the heaters in that they used to heat up the airplanes, those big pipes, to give us heat in the hangar.

H: That was Christmas of what, '44?

E: Yes, '44. And then, I guess about February of '45 we were sent down to Baltimore to the air field at Baltimore, and that's where we were when the CAP was taken out of business.

H: So you in effect stayed on active duty from '42 to '45.

E: Right. I was three and a half years.

H: Three and a half years. You're probably close to the champion.

E: I don't know. There were a bunch of us who were there. Rudie Chalow came in right after I did, if I remember right. Rudie was recruited, too. He was a CAP member in New Jersey. But we needed mechanics so bad at the base, we had no equipment, and Rudie'd had his own repair tools. He was just a youngster, early twenties, somewhere. So they sent him in to talk to the major, and he said he'd bring his equipment in if they'd give him so much a day rent on the equipment. So he came in very shortly after I did, if I remember. Yes, he came in on the twentieth. I came in on the seventeenth and he came in on the twentieth in '42, and he was with the CAP up to the tail end. Al Muthig was one of the first ones. He came in with the group on March 4th, and he was still with it at the time it closed up. And I'm trying to think, there were a few others, I can't remember any of them right now, that just about rowed the whole length of it.

H: That was a good long hitch.

E: Helen was in until Tow Target 1 closed.

H: The rumor situation. Did Helen and some of the other lady pilots, well she was not a pilot. Did some of the lady pilots actually fly Coastal Patrol missions?

E: Yes, I've said, right at the beginning, I think. And then our teletype operators, our plotting board girls and all that were mostly the wives of the pilots that were on duty. They came in with their families and we'd hire them and put them on.

H: Even on the female pilots, after a while they would not

let them fly.

E: No, if any of them flew it was in the first few weeks. Just that first March, because they were out of it. There were a couple I seem to remember vaguely, a couple that came in. There were a lot of women pilots, but they weren't flying. They were on the ground.

H: How about, if you will to close out, kind of a summary of how you feel about the relative worth and importance of what you all were doing at the time.

E: Well, the quotation was made in that Readers' Digest article that the Germans said what wrecked their submarine warfare along the Atlantic coast were the damned little yellow planes. I remember them as saying those damned little red and yellow planes, but you know, it was an actual quote. We had some beautiful citations from the Bomber Command, from the Navy and everything else at the time Coastal Patrol 1 was closed for the work that we'd done, not just the fact that we'd dropped the first bomb on an enemy sub, but for observing, picking out wrecks in the ocean, very similar to the work you do now in the search and rescue. We did an awful lot of that. We even had some funny things. We had a fellow named Crimm who was flying and saw something that looked weird on the beach and went down and landed. It turned out to be a bunch of scrap rubber, which he picked up and turned in somewhere, and he got a citation for that, because scrap rubber was very valuable. Really some odd stuff. I should tell you about Father Divine, too, I guess, but that isn't part of this. (Laughter) Father Divine, I guess you remember him, he was in the hotel at Brigantine. Brigantine's the next island to Atlantic City, and they had a small resort hotel. Atlantic City was terribly run down at the time that World War II started and the Army took over all over, but Father Divine

had the hotel at Brigantine. Our pilots used to delight, every time they were having baptisms ceremonies out on the wharf off Hotel Brigantine they would fly over and hedge over and run them all off into the water. So we were always getting complaints about that. (Laughter) It was funny at the time.

H: The Reverend Moon of the Forties?

E: Yes. Then when we went on Tow Target work, it wasn't as dramatic. It wasn't as impressive, but the batteries had to be trained, and I think it took a lot of guts to fly on the end of a very short cable with this sleeve out there with them firing live ammunition at the sleeve or the target going along in back. And some of those runs, when I read about the helicopter disaster on that movie where the people were killed, some of the runs our fellows made with targets and sleeves, it's just lucky they weren't cracked up. They would ask them to come closer and closer and closer, you know. It was really bad.

H: If it hadn't been for our tow target people and some other little people that got overlooked, called WASPs, the tow target business would have been knocked out.

E: Yes.

H: Most male pilots got better sense than to pull a sleeve.

E: Well, talking about the women pilots, I still have to pay tribute to those gals that really, the ones that brought the planes in at Newark, before they were sent overseas. They were wonderful pilots. They never lost a plane. They were precision pilots. And while we were at Newark, the Air Force found they had a lot of excess pilots. They knocked the women

out and put their own flight men in, and they cracked up all over Newark Airport. And we were so happy, you just can't imagine how happy we were. (Laughter) They took our girls off.

H: We showed them. I guess what you're saying, Marilou, is that all of you felt like you had really made a tremendous contribution.

E: Yes. We were very proud of ourselves, really. We felt strictly part of the Army, Army Air Force, to the extent we got in an awful ruckus one night when a fellow in the Marines picked a fight with an Army man and our fellows jumped in on the Army side and the Navy and the Coast Guard jumped in on the Marine's side. But we really felt like part of the Army. We were treated like part of the Army. We had very good relations with the Coast Guard. They were down there at May's Landing, right below us, Cape May, right below us. Course we had Coast Guards back at Gardener's Base at Atlantic City. We had excellent relations with them. We had excellent relations with the Navy. We always had Navy liaison men with us. And we had our own Army groups that were assigned to the bombs. They were regular soldiers, but they were assigned to us, just like an Army unit.

H: Just to handle the bombs.

E: We were treated just like the Army. Our fellows had the same-- Major Farr was a real chauvinist. He didn't believe in women in uniform. None of the women were allowed to wear uniforms after hours. We came to work in uniforms, went home in uniforms, and then took them off. But the men were in them permanently, just like Army men, and they had all the courtesies and everything else, extended to them and mixed in with Army officers.

H: You told us a humorous story about you being referred to as Mr. Eggenweiler.

E: Yes. They had no official designation for a Flight Officer except Mister. There were two of us. One was a girl named Upchurch. She was Col. Gresham's secretary from Florida. She was Mr. Upchurch and I was Mr. Eggenweiler. Of course my husband was a first lieutenant, but he was Lt. Eggenweiler, so it was very confusing. If they asked for Mr. Eggenweiler, they wanted me; if they asked for Lt. Eggenweiler, they wanted him. (Laughter) It was very stupid. I didn't have to answer the phone, but Upchurch had to answer the phone and say: "Tow Target 22, Mr. Upchurch speaking," in her very feminine voice. (Laughter)

H: It would bother people. Well, Marilou, let's go off tape unofficially, and let me say that I certainly appreciate your unusual insight into the active duty period and your startling memory of some of the things that occurred during that period. It will make a very valuable addition to our archives.

# Civil Air Patrol
# Oral History Interview

WNHC 20.81-4

MS. MARILOU CRESCENZO EGGENWEILER


**NATIONAL HISTORICAL COMMITTEE**
**Headquarters CAP**